FACULTY SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of September 25, 2002 - (approved)

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The Faculty Senate Executive Committee met at 2 p.m. on Wednesday, September 25, 2002, in Capen Hall's Furnas Room to consider the following agenda:

1. Approval of the minutes of September 4, 2002
2. Report of the Chair
3. Report of the President/Provost
4. Report of Vice Provost for Academic Affairs Kerry Grant re Web-based Grading Administrative Guidelines
5. Report of the Grading Committee - W. Baumer
6. Report of the Graduate School Executive Committee - P. Nickerson
7. Academic Calendar - VPAA Kerry Grant, J. Boot
8. Classroom Quality - J. Zambon
9. Old/New Business

Item 1: Approval of the minutes of September 4, 2002

The September 4th FSEC minutes were approved as distributed.

Item 2: Report of the Chair

The Chair, on behalf of the entire FSEC, acknowledged and affirmed our appreciation for all the help and good work that Anna Kedzierski has provided as secretary of both the Faculty Senate and Professional Staff Senate for the past 11 years. Thankfully, Anna

has only "semi-retired," so she will continue to work part-time for both senates for the next several years.

An e-mail message from the Chair will be sent to the entire faculty via Listserv soon. It will provide an overview of our role and structure, and encourage their participation in faculty governance. Faculty will be informed of information available on the Faculty Senate Web site < http://wings.buffalo.edu/faculty/governance/fac-sen /> and advised to contact any FSEC member if they have concerns that they would like the Senate to address.

The Provost was scheduled to host the next FSEC meeting on October 2nd. She has requested a meeting swap, so she will host the October 16th FSEC meeting instead. Since there are no urgent matters pending, the Chair suggested with group approval that the October 2nd meeting be cancelled.

Item 3: Report of the President/Provost

Neither President Greiner nor Provost Capaldi attended today's meeting.

Item 4: Report of Vice Provost for Academic Affairs Kerry Grant re Web-based Grading Administrative Guidelines

Vice Provost Grant distributed a copy of "Web-Based Grading Administrative Guidelines" and acknowledged that the matter has already been forwarded to the Senate Grading Committee for consideration.

The proposal is to make Web grading mandatory at the end of this Fall 2002 semester. The current policy allows faculty or a

designated "alternate grader" to submit grades online, and the proposed policy provides for a "department grader" who would be authorized to enter grades on behalf of a faculty member. Faculty would thus have the option of entering grades personally or delegating responsibility to an alternate grader or departmental grader, who would usually be an administrative assistant in the unit.

Web grading has been an available option for several semesters, and there have been no problems. We now want to replace the paper bubble sheet option so that all grades will be submitted online.

Students won't be consulted because they're no directly affected, except for receiving their grades a day or two sooner, perhaps.

Professor Schack and others expressed a preference for calling the assignee the "department recorder" instead of "department grader." He suggested that a downloadable form on the Web would be helpful to instructors who don't have access to computers for inputting grades. Dr. Grant said that should be easy to implement.

Early feed from the Graduate School objects to how soon grades need to be submitted after final exams. There are some faculty who think graduate courses should have an extended deadline because those exams take longer to read/grade. Dr. Grant said this causes problems for cross-listed courses available to both graduate and undergraduate students. Professors Schack and Baumer oppose extending the deadline for graduate courses.

Grading policies won't be affected by Web procedures. Exceptions will still be dealt with departmentally as they were in the past. The method of entering the grades is the only facet being changed.

Professor Baumer explained that Web grading is better than bubble sheets in several ways. It's possible to pause, resume, submit, and make changes. He said that, although grades are supposed to be submitted within four days of a final exam, the system deadline is actually four days after the end of the exam period.

Professor Schack recommends that faculty who are resistant to Web grading should have to explain how it differs significantly from paper grading. The online counterpart is so similar that this should be a minor issue, not a forum for griping about other matters.

Item 5: Report of the Grading Committee - W. Baumer

Professor Baumer, chair of the Grading Committee, reported that they have been discussing the problem of students who resign from an excessive number of courses. The resignation option, i.e. "R" grades that don't affect GPAs, was designed so students wouldn't shy away from registering from courses that might be too difficult, but it's being used as an easy way to avoid a low grade without blemishing the overall grade point average. Some Committee members want to impose a maximum limit of five resignations.

Professor Mayne recommended limiting students to five resignations plus five more with an advisor's signature instead of mandating a strict limit of five.

Professor Boot said that some students routinely over-register for courses and then resign from any that become problematic. This unfairly prevents other students from being able to register after courses are full.

Professor Schack suggested that the Committee might strengthen its case by providing numerical data on how many students resign. He said that, although R grades don't affect a student's academic standing, they do appear on transcripts and can sway decisions pertaining to graduate school admission.

Professor Baumer explained that students can receive full financial aid, do poorly, resign their failed courses, and start afresh the following semester. There is no penalty for this type of abuse now.

The Grading Committee is also considering revising the definition of

probation to be the correlative of good standing. The current policy of dismissing students after two semesters on probation would probably be extended to a third semester.

Item 6: Report of the Graduate School Executive Committee - P. Nickerson

Professor Nickerson reported that the Graduate School Executive Committee is discussing:

- language courses and the number of credits earned in combined masters' programs
- length of time for resolving an incomplete grade
- grade changes after coursework has been submitted and grades have been reported
- electronic ballots (that may be printed out and mailed in) for voting on by-laws, etc.
- repetition of graduate courses
- course sharing by students working on dual graduate degrees, i.e. How many courses can be applied to both programs?
- whether co-advisors should be permitted for master's or doctoral programs?

Item 7: Academic Calendar - VPAA Kerry Grant, J. Boot

The Chair explained that, although FSEC had voted at our last meeting to accept Vice Provost Grant's proposed academic calendar, a motion made at the September Faculty Senate meeting resurrected the issue, which will get a second reading at the October 1st Senate meeting.

Professor Boot distributed handouts showing an alternative calendar and said that making a decision on it is not an urgent matter. His

proposed Fall semester calendars for 2004-2006 provided for a more even distribution of day and evening class contact hours by switching the Tuesday before Thanksgiving to a different day's schedule. His "golden rule" is that there should be 2,250 classroom contact hours. Time is not of essence, and it's more important to do the calendar right than to rush ahead with the flawed academic calendar that was distributed at the last meeting.

Dr. Grant remarked that Professor Boot's version was "consistent in its inconsistencies." There are many ways to configure the academic calendar, and Professor Boot's is extremely complex, which is contrary to principles that the planners tried to adhere to. Time is of the essence because 2004 isn't far away for planning purposes, and the registrar would like to see the calendar settled on now.

The Faculty Senate was unable to agree on a model when it had the responsibility for drafting an academic calendar several years ago, so it relinquished its duty. The job was then given to a committee comprised of members from numerous academic units who also failed to arrive at consensus. President Greiner then assigned responsibility to the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, who worked with a small group, including faculty senators Baumer and Fourtner, to create the proposed version that is currently being discussed with a variety of appropriate assemblies.

Professor Baumer said that the VPAA-proposed calendar with its irregular distribution of class hours was acceptable to SUNY. Although it could have been smoothed out by juggling class schedules on certain days, the confusion and aggravation to many students are not worth the trade-off.

A motion was made and seconded that Dr. Grant's proposed academic calendar be accepted. The motion passed by a 13-4 vote.

Item 8: Classroom Quality - J. Zambon

Professor Zambon, chair of the Classroom Quality Committee, said that previous Committee reports of deplorable classroom conditions had not been acted on, so the problems continue. He mentioned numerous and ongoing complaints he had received about dirty/damaged classrooms, broken desks, malfunctioning or non-functioning equipment, and unsatisfactory temperature control and ventilation. Such problems are prevalent on both North and South Campuses, and many requests for repairs have gone unheeded.

The unpredictable availability or lack of classroom technology also creates problems. Many faculty have tailored their instructional materials to take advantage of educational technology that may be available one year and then gotten assigned to an "unwired" classroom the following year. Unfortunately, the number of IT classrooms has been decreasing even as the demand for IT increases.

FSEC members felt strongly that these are serious problems that deserve prompt attention. Since earlier reports had been ignored, discussion focused on how to get some action on the highest priorities, who should contact whom, etc. A letter from Professor Zambon, outlining the numerous problems he described today, will be sent to Chair Cohen, who will contact the Provost about the importance of dealing with these unsatisfactory conditions.

Professor Schack contended that the sorry state of the economy makes the likelihood of upgrading or rehabbing all inadequate classrooms unrealistic. Professor Brazeau suggested that increased fundraising efforts could help to pay for fixing up some classrooms. Some departments have been able to improve the quality of their classrooms with donations.

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Will Hepfer
Secretary of the Faculty Senate

Present: Chair: M. Cohen
Secretary: W. Hepfer
Architecture: S. Danford
Arts & Sciences: W. Baumer, M. Churchill, S. Schack
Dental Medicine: J. Zambon
Graduate School of Education: R. Stein
Engineering & Applied Sciences: R. Mayne
Health Related Professions: G. Farkas
Informatics: F. Tutzauer
Law: L. Swartz
Management: J. Boot
Medicine & Biomedical Sciences: C. Granger, R. Morin, J. Hassett
Nursing: E. Perese
Pharmacy: G. Brazeau
SUNY Senators: J. Adams-Volpe, H. Durand, M. Kramer, P. Nickerson
University Libraries: CA Fabian
Parliamentarian: D. Malone

Guests: W. Coles, Chair, Professional Staff Senate
K. Daley, Spectrum
B. Del Genio, VPAA
K. Grant, VPAA
D. Longenecker, Reporter
L. Stewart, EDAAA

Absent: Arts & Sciences: C. Smith